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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 PARAMARIBO 000178

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - SURINAME, 2ND QUARTER FY 2008

REF: 07 STATE 171211

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¶1. Per the instructions in RefTel, Paramaribo submits the following post fraud summary for the second quarter of FY 2008. Answers are keyed to the letters found in RefTel.

¶A. Country Conditions

The economy, while stable, is still developing, and more than half the population lives below the poverty line. Inferior economic opportunities and low wages create incentives for economic migration to other countries, including The Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, and, to a lesser extent, the United States. At the same time, Suriname's inability to fully control its borders and large parts of its interior make it an attractive place for illegal migrants, including Guyanese, Chinese, Brazilian, and Haitian nationals. The lack of computerized systems at the borders (including at the airport) and within the local government creates other problems, including information/identity verification and criminal activity checks. Corruption within the government also leads to questions regarding the legality/legitimacy of travel documents, residency permits, and other government-issued documents.

¶B. NIV Fraud

The volume of NIV fraud is low, occurring predominantly in the business and pleasure category. Applicants sometimes present forged job letters, salary slips, employee identification badges, bank statements, and other fraudulent documents in support of their applications. Applicants also occasionally attempt to conceal prior deportations from, or overstays in, the United States, which is typically uncovered by checking the CLASS database.

Post recently reenergized its fraud prevention program, increasing the number of fraud investigations. In one instance, a discovery of similar false documents and stories used by at least six NIV applicants, most of them Guyanese nationals, resulted in reporting a false document provider to the local police.

In FY 2006, a woman suspected of having ties with an alien smuggling ring attempted to procure a visa for her infant granddaughter. Investigation into the case indicated that the woman had plans to sell the child to a distant family member living illegally in the United States. The visa was refused.

In FY 2007, using the text search function of the CCD, post identified a naturalized US citizen who was "sponsoring" several young Surinamese nationals for tourist visas each month. Although difficult to confirm, the consular section believes that this U.S. citizen, 20 years the senior of the individuals applying for visas, was arranging for these young adults to work short-term in the United States while they "visited" him. The U.S. citizen contacted post directly in the first quarter of 2008 reporting that several of his "visitors" had absconded in the U.S. and could not be located.

In the third quarter of FY 2007, a Surinamese applicant applied for a NIV to visit her sister in New York. Upon interview, it became apparent that the sister in the U.S. had entered on a B2 visa and never departed. The visa was refused under section 214b. Upon review of IDENT results, a previous entry into the U.S., at the same time as the sister still living illegally in the U.S., was discovered, showing a different first name and date of birth. Applicant had used a younger sister's civil documents to obtain a new passport, in a new identity, in an effort to reenter the U.S. Applicant dressed in children's clothing and wore her hair in pigtails, in an effort to convince the Consul that she was younger.

In the second quarter of 2008, a group of young men, some Haitian and some Surinamese, all resident in Suriname, appeared at the Embassy to "pick up" their visas for the U.S., which supposedly had been arranged for by the organization sponsoring their travel to a trafficking in persons conference in the U.S. The documents presented were of a very low quality, obviously created by non-native English speakers. The group of men, who were using the invitation to attend the conference as a means to illegally immigrate to the U.S., had, in turn, fallen victim to an advance fee fraud scheme originating in West Africa. The conference was not real, nor were any of the documents, and the young men had sent their entire life savings via Western Union to the con artists in Africa.

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NIV applicants include TCNs and recently naturalized Surinamers from Guyana and China, as well as Haitian nationals residing in French Guiana, which is part of the Embassy's consular district. These cases often lack good supporting documentation and/or tend to be riddled with fraud.

There are reports of organized smuggling rings and false document providers catering to specific TCN communities. For instance, in early FY 2006, a group of 30 Chinese applied for NIVs under the pretext of a conference in the United States. These applicants were clearly economic migrants who were using Suriname as a transit country and were directed to the consular section by a recruiter. One of the applicants presented an expired Chinese passport with a photo of an apparently different individual, although his most recent passport had his photo.

Haitian applicants from French Guiana, part of the Embassy's consular district, frequently present false employment documents and U.S. contact information; their claims are usually easy to disprove as most such applicants lack familiarity with the details of the documents they are presenting. Occasionally, Haitian NIV applicants have presented what appeared to be forged French residency cards and false immigration stamps in their passports. (The French Embassy has engaged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject of Haitians issued Surinamese visas on the basis of fraudulent residency cards.)

In the first quarter of FY 2008, a group of Haitians applied, separately, but on the same day, for NIVs presenting suspicious work documents and bank statements. All the applicants were refused under section 214b. However, after review of IDENT results it became apparent that at least one of the applicants had previously attempted to enter the U.S. on a fraudulent French passport, eventually giving CBP authorities a different name, which was, in turn, different from the name he used when applying for the NIV at the Embassy in Paramaribo.

The consular section has not detected any individual or systemic employment-based, student and exchange visitor, or religious worker

visa fraud in the last two years. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a tsunami disaster employment scam appeared as an advertisement in a local business publication, offering disaster relief job opportunities in the United States in exchange for a fee. The scam was brought to the attention of local authorities. No tsunami-related employment applications were presented at post.

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C. IV Fraud

IV volume is low, and with relatively low incidence of fraud. TCNs, primarily Guyanese, make up half of the IV workload. A significant percentage of Surinamese IV applicants are recently naturalized former Guyanese and Chinese nationals. These cases often lack good supporting documentation and may involve fraud. Especially in cases of TCNs, post takes care to verify family relationships, employing CA/FPP investigative tools such as LexisNexis.

Police certificates acquired by IV applicants are untrustworthy and unreliable. Post began double-checking all IV applicants with the RSO office to determine if the individuals have any criminal backgrounds. Several cases were identified in which individuals with violent criminal or drug trafficking histories were issued clean police certificates by local authorities.

Due to the unreliability of civil documents in the region, Post no longer accepts birth, marriage, death, or divorce certificates more than 6 months old, as it is impossible to determine if the authorities in Suriname or Guyana legitimately issued the document.

A recent marriage fraud investigation showed that the marriage between an American citizen petitioner who filed for his Guyanese "stepdaughter" residing in Suriname and her mother, a Guyanese national residing in New York, was fictitious. While there was no record of the mother ever having resided with the petitioner or having received a green card, she appeared to have been living with the beneficiary's biological father in a house registered as his property. The evidence suggested that the biological parents of the beneficiary immigrated to the United States illegally, following which the mother proceeded with a fictitious marriage to an American citizen in order to petition for her daughter to join them. The consular section is currently in the process of returning the case

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file to DHS for revocation.

The consular section encountered a case of employment-based fraud in FY 2004 when a small restaurant in Mississippi petitioned for five Chinese applicants to work as specialty chefs (E-3 Skilled Worker category). The interviews at post showed that none of the applicants had any cooking experience, and were in fact related to the petitioner. The petition was revoked.

In FY 2005, the consular section worked with DHS on a case of a Surinamer who entered the United States in 1999 as a dependant of an A-1 holder spouse and later sought to benefit from an employment-based petition for "babysitting services." An investigation showed that this applicant was already running a shipping business in the United States and had no babysitting experience.

D. DV Fraud

While the number of DV cases processed at post is very low, the consular section encountered a number of cases where individuals or bogus organizations tried to exploit public interest in the DV Lottery to earn money by posing as the U.S. Government or an authorized facilitating agency and soliciting fees via online credit card payment or Western Union money transfer. In FY 2006 and 2007, the Embassy issued media alerts and a press release to warn the public about these schemes, and the consular officer gave an interview about the subject to a leading local newspaper to further raise awareness.

The consular section encountered a new case of DV Lottery scam,

reported by one of the targeted individuals, in which a bogus organization posed as the U.S. Department of State and solicited via e-mail a fee of \$989.67 via Western Union money transfer from "lucky winners" for further processing of their "cases." The Embassy continued prominently displaying a DV Lottery fraud alert on its web site and in its public waiting area to raise public awareness of such scams.

1E. ACS and Passport Fraud

The incidence of ACS and passport fraud is low. In FY 2004, the consular section encountered one case of a Guyanese citizen posing as an American citizen; his claim to U.S. citizenship was easily exposed as false upon consultation with the CCD database and further interviewing of the subject. The consular section encountered no ACS fraud cases in FY 2005, 2006, or 2007. In FY 2008, the consular section was contacted by the Surinamese police regarding a prisoner who was claiming to be a U.S. citizen. While an investigation concluded that the prisoner had lived in the U.S., he had never become a U.S. citizen and remains a Guyanese national.

1F. Adoption Fraud

The consular section's adoption workload is minimal, with one orphan adoption case in FY 2005, two cases in FY 2006, four cases in FY 2007, and three current cases in FY 2008. While post has not detected any indication of fraud in these cases, there are unconfirmed reports that a criminal network is operating in Suriname that relies on recruiters and corrupt government officials to entice poor parents to give up their children for adoption in exchange for money. According to a few unofficial accounts, children are being placed with wealthier families both locally and in Europe, predominantly the Netherlands, as well in Aruba and Curacao (there have been no reports mentioning the United States). In cases of child placement outside of Suriname, recruiters allegedly rely on false document providers, including corrupt local government officials, to obtain legal adoption documents or fraudulent birth certificates to enable them to take the children out of the country, entirely bypassing the lawful adoption mechanism. The legal adoption mechanism involves a court determination that the child is an orphan or that the child's parents are unfit or otherwise unable to take care of the child's basic needs, a review of all documentation and its authenticity, and an investigation into the matter by the family legal affairs bureau. To ensure that none of its adoption cases involve fraud, the consular officer and staff conduct field investigations before approving any adoption case.

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1G. Use of DNA Testing

Post may request DNA testing in Immigrant Visa cases when the relationship of a beneficiary to the petitioner is in question. Testing is coordinated through genetics testing laboratories in the U.S. Samples are collected by a panel physician, under the supervision of the consular officer, and then forwarded to the laboratory by the consular section, observing at all times chain of custody protocols. Results are sent directly to the consular section by the laboratory and reviewed by the consular officer for consideration in the case.

1H. Asylum and Other DHS Benefit Fraud

Post processes very few asylum cases, and has not uncovered any fraud in Visa 92/93 processing. All recent cases involved derivative following-to-join applicants: two Haitian nationals in FY 2006 and one Surinamese applicant in FY 2004. Embassy Port-au-Prince fraud unit assisted in assessing Haitian documents. Post has encountered no fraud in lost or stolen I-551 cases, as was easily verified through coordination with the DHS Forensics Document Lab.

1I. Alien Smuggling, Trafficking, Organized Crime, Terrorist Travel

There have been reports that TCNs, most particularly Chinese, Haitian and Guyanese nationals, are using Suriname as a staging area for onward travel to North America and that criminal smuggling and

possibly trafficking networks are operating in Suriname, providing these third-country nationals with false documents and facilitating their onward travel. In FY 2007, the consular officer assisted DHS-ICE in identifying two young Guyanese females, using fraudulent UK passports, being trafficking into prostitution to the U.S., via Suriname and Aruba. The females were intercepted in Aruba by CBP officers at pre-departure clearance and placed into a trafficking victims' recovery program. Chinese Embassy officials have acknowledged the large influx of Chinese migrants.

The Government of Suriname has acknowledged the problem of human trafficking into and through Suriname and has taken measures to deal with this problem. As a result, in 2006, Suriname was upgraded from "Tier Two Watch" to a "Tier Two" country in the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report, indicating that trafficking in persons (TIP) into and through Suriname is an issue and the local government is taking action to prevent it. Suriname retained its "Tier Two" ranking in the 2007 TIP report. There are reports that some of the Brazilian, Dominican, Guyanese, and Colombian women and girls are trafficked through Suriname to Europe for sexual exploitation. Recent re-energized activities by the host government to combat TIP, resulting in more police investigations and its new cooperation with consular representatives of the origin countries of nationals believed to be trafficked into and through Suriname, show progress in anti-TIP efforts. The Embassy cooperates with other foreign missions and consular representatives in Suriname, and consular section staff meets with counterparts to discuss fraud, TIP, and alien smuggling.

Organized crime remains a problem in Suriname, with drug trafficking, illegal weapons trafficking, and money laundering being particularly problematic. The Surinamese police have special task forces established to counter these organizations. With this in mind, the consular section takes particular precautions to identify these individuals and looks for several indicators in visa applicants that might suggest connections to these organizations.

There are no documented cases of terrorist travel through Suriname to the U.S. or other areas; however poor control of borders makes it difficult to make definitive statements. It is known that members of the FARC, the Columbian resistance group which has been designated a terrorist organization by the Secretary of State, operate in and out of Suriname.

J. DS Criminal Fraud Investigations

There have been no DS criminal fraud investigations at post to date.

K. Host Country Passport, Identity Documents, and Civil Registry

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The consular section notes the 2005 release of an updated machine-readable Surinamese passport reduced document fraud, as the new passport is of significantly better quality and has more security features than the old, non-machine readable version. In some cases, the poor quality of the old style Surinamese passports (which are still in circulation) and of Guyanese passports and vital records continues to make it difficult to distinguish between genuine and fraudulent documents. There are reports of false document providers, including those catering to specific third-country national (TCN) communities (i.e., Guyanese, Chinese, and Haitians). While it does not appear easy to obtain genuine national documents, the consular section has noted many cases with discrepancies in names and dates and places of birth on legitimately issued documents and several cases in which documents were issued to imposters using another individual's civil documents.

Most civil documents are hand-written on paper with no security features and are almost impossible to verify. Identity cards and drivers licenses are basic and can easily be replicated or forged. All Surinamese citizens are required to register with the civil authority in the area they reside and should be able to obtain a declaration of status from this office (the Surinamese Embassy if the person is resident abroad). This declaration contains

information about the person's marital status, children, and address. The reliability of this document, however, remains questionable due to reports of widespread corruption among low level civil employees.

L. Cooperation with Host Government Authorities

Host government authorities cooperate with the Embassy in fraud matters, and are consistently responsive to the Embassy's consular fraud-related inquiries. Working with the regional security office and local officials to enhance fraud prevention efforts, the consular section provides travel document fraud alert information to local immigration officials. The fraud department of the police, which is the central point of contact for fraud-related issues in the host government, has contacted the Embassy on several occasions to verify the authenticity of U.S. travel documents that appeared altered or fake, including passports and green cards. These documents uniformly turned out to be merely in poor condition, but in fact valid.

In the first quarter of FY 2007 and in the second quarter of FY 2008, the consular officer conducted fraudulent document detection training at the National Police Academy with attendees from Immigration, Intelligence, Police, Fraud Detection, and Consular Affairs. According to the penal code, providing false documents is an offense punishable by a prison sentence ranging from 6 months to 5 years, depending on the seriousness of the violation, and/or a fine. The host government consistently demonstrates excellent cooperation with requests for verification of civil documents. When the Embassy reported a false document provider to the police, the police treated the matter seriously; however, the offender could not be prosecuted due to a lack of evidence.

In the second quarter of FY 2007, the consular section hosted a fraud-focused lunch which members of the local police, intelligence, and consular community attended. The lunch focused on regional fraud trends and useful contacts and information was exchanged.

In the last quarter of FY 2006, the local police coordinated with the RSO and consular section on an investigation into a visa-washing and false document provider in Paramaribo. The arrests effectively shut the ring down, but lack of evidence prevented prosecution. Information netted in the investigation showed links between this ring and other suspected rings in the Caribbean.

M. Areas of Particular Concern

The diversity of the population in Suriname allows outsiders to easily blend in and bring attention to themselves. This is particularly true for neighboring Guyanese, who come to Suriname to live and work, often without legal permission.

Embassy Paramaribo is also responsible for French Guiana, and faces several challenges in this area. Most of the applicants from French Guiana are Haitians, supposedly with legal residence status in

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France. Their language skills in French are minimal, their documents are suspect and are nearly impossible to verify because of post's lack of resources in French Guiana and lack of French speaking personnel.

N. Staffing and Training

Due to the small size of the consular section, all staff members are tasked with fraud prevention responsibilities. Consular Chief Gwendolyn S. Webb attended the Fraud Prevention Managers course in June 2006. Webb and Senior FSN, Anne van Exel, attended the regional fraud conference in Georgetown in the second quarter of FY 2007.

SCHREIBER HUGHES